



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

## NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Doug Carlson, Information Officer – (916) 653-5114

[Paul.Carlson@water.ca.gov](mailto:Paul.Carlson@water.ca.gov)

Maggie Macias, Information Officer – (916) 653-8743

[Maggie.Macias@water.ca.gov](mailto:Maggie.Macias@water.ca.gov)

### **Retired Department of Water Resources Electrician Receives Medal of Valor, State's Highest Honor**

**SACRAMENTO** – The Kevin Mefford, a former hydroelectric plant electrician at the Department of Water Resources (DWR), is among 52 current and former state employees who will be awarded a Silver Medal of Valor today “for demonstrating extraordinary acts of bravery and heroism in order to save the life of another.”

Nancy McFadden, Executive Secretary to Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr., was scheduled to present the awards in an afternoon ceremony at the California Highway Patrol Academy in West Sacramento. The Medal of Valor is the highest honor given to state employees.

Mefford was recognized for his heroic service in fighting a fire at the Ronald B. Robie Thermalito Pumping-Generating Plant near Oroville on Thanksgiving Day 2012. A volunteer firefighter at the Butte County Fire Department, Mefford was one of the first responders dispatched to the fire in the five-story plant.

Mefford’s familiarity with the plant’s layout and potential hazards were invaluable in ensuring the safety of Cal FIRE’s responders at the blaze, according to Cal FIRE and DWR supervisors on the scene. Mefford guided firefighters through zero visibility inside the smoke-filled plant and helped them avoid injury as they made their way through the maze of equipment and other hazards. His “Citation for a Heroic Service” states:

“Mr. Mefford worked at the plant for 19 years and was familiar with it. He acted as a guide for his fellow firefighters, and they made at least eight attacks on the fire as it kept re-igniting and spreading. Some firefighters became low on air and one became tangled in cables as the smoke eliminated visibility. In the dark, smoky, confusing and often dangerous situation, Mr. Mefford helped them avoid many hazards, including electrical equipment, confined spaces, stored lubricants and many feet of wiring.

“The next day, although the fire was not extinguished, Mr. Mefford donned his firefighting gear again to assess the situation on each floor. Without Mr. Mefford’s heroic service, the plant probably would have been lost.”

Dave Starks, who was chief of DWR’s Division of Operations and Maintenance at the time, said of Mefford’s actions, “You can’t overstate his effort.” Mefford later recalled: “I have had many hours in the past working in the plant, and to see it damaged by fire was very difficult. I was proud to be able to contribute to securing some of the plant systems and fighting the fire.”

Mefford previously received the Governor’s Employee Safety Award in 2013. He retired in 2014 after 21 years of DWR service.

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*Visit [SaveOurWater.com](http://SaveOurWater.com) to find out how everyone can do their part, and visit <http://drought.ca.gov> to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought. The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning and plans for future statewide water needs.*

